



Dennis-Yarmouth RSD

Instruction Office Newsletter

Letting Go of Your Students on That Very Last Day

One of the worst things about being a teacher is letting your students go on the very last day. It is such a bittersweet thing. Part of me can't wait, but part of me knows saying goodbye can be very emotional. It's like there is an elephant in the room the entire day. The kids ask if they are going to see you next year. Some kids start to act out because they know their entire lives are going to be different in the summer. Some kids just want to hug you and enjoy the time they have left. Some kids could care less, and that's okay.

There is something about the very last day that makes me vulnerable. On that day, I realize that what we have in that classroom will never be again. It can't ever be again. It shouldn't ever be again. We must move on with life, and most adults understand that. As teachers, we know kids don't always understand that. They learn as they go, but when you are a child's first or second experience in school, they still have a hard time understanding that they will never be in the same room with the same teacher and kids ever again.

I am always happy to bring the year to a close, but on that last day, I don't feel the happiness I feel in the weeks leading up to the end of the year. It never fails. I know that I am letting each and every one of my kids go. I watch them walk out the door like a parent would watch his/her own child drive away for college. Some kids will come back to say hello more often than some. Some kids that leave your room, you

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IMPORTANT DATES

June 11-	DY Graduation
June 14-	Flag Day
June 20-	Summer Solstice @ 6:35pm
June 22-	Last Day of School



IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Central office is a **fragrance-free zone** so please be respectful and plan accordingly when you visit.

Due to one of our members at the CO being highly sensitive to any type of fragrance, we ask that staff visiting/meeting at the Administration building refrain from using any scented products. Fragrances from personal care products, air fresheners, laundry and other cleaning products have been associated with adversely affecting a person's health. We ask that we all work together to make the environment a safe and healthy workplace for everyone. Thank you very much for your cooperation!



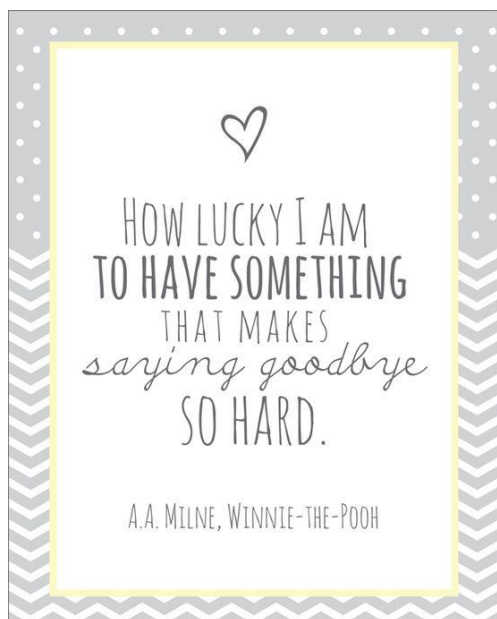


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may never see again. But deep down, I know that our connection that we have in that very moment will never be the same. I have come to accept this is inevitable, but I am never fully prepared to say goodbye.

As the final bell rang, my students didn't run out like some kids that were already outside. They didn't go for their backpacks. I noticed one child just closing his eyes and purely enjoying the final seconds of being in "our" classroom. There was another student who just hung onto me and she gave me the biggest hug and although she said nothing, I could see so much gratitude in her face. As I fight back tears, I open the door, and off they go. Just like that.

Moments like this define us as teachers, and they are good reminders of the real reason we teach. For me, it's not about the test scores, standards, or the mandated curriculum. We all know it's not about the paycheck. It's those relationships that we are able to create, even if some of them last only for a short while. We give back every day. Our impact on children will not expire anytime soon.



I once heard a quote by Banksy. "They say we die twice – once when the last breath leaves our body and once when the last person we know says our name." After

hearing that, all I could think about was how amazing teachers are, and how our impact on people is infinite. Even after that last person we know says our name for the very last time. Although we are letting go of our students, we will never have to let go of the impact and difference we have made in their lives and the lives of so many others.

Emily Liscomb, Education to the Core

Counteracting Summer Reading Loss

"Poor children lose ground over the summer; more-advantaged children do not," say Anne McGill-Franzen and Natalia Ward (University of Tennessee/Knoxville) and Maria Cahill (University of Kentucky/Lexington) in this article in *The Reading Teacher*. Not having access to books in June, July, and August results in a two-month loss each summer for poor children compared to a one-month gain for more-advantaged children, and that accumulates over the years into a crushing achievement gap. Getting low-SES children reading over the summer is the most effective way to change that dynamic, but what works? Research suggests that the key ingredients include:



- Students choosing their own books based on their interests; this is especially important for early readers; matching books to students' Lexile or Fountas/Pinnell reading levels is less important than interest;
- Students getting 10-12 books for the summer;
- Students owning the books (versus borrowing them); research across 27 countries found that a home library is as important as parental education and twice as important as the father's occupation in predicting educational outcomes;
- Students getting series books with familiar language and literacy elements;
- Students selecting slightly more challenging books each summer;
- Students getting e-book or audio formats that provide access to more-challenging material;
- Guidance to parents on reading and interacting with their children (but not making it too much like school);





- Guidance to teachers on integrating books with other literacy activities;
- Teachers and parents framing summer reading as fun rather than work, with the goal being enjoyment and exploration rather than remediation and achievement gains.

Studies show that students who benefit most from free-distribution programs for summer reading are the poorest students. “If educators must make hard choices about how to allocate resources for summer reading, they must give books to the neediest students!” say McGill-Franzen, Ward, and Cahill.



“Summers: Some Are Reading, Some Are Not! It Matters” by Anne McGill-Franzen, Natalia Ward, and Maria Cahill in *The Reading Teacher*, May/June 2016 (Vol. 69, #6, p. 585-596), available for purchase at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/trtr.1461/abstract>; the authors can be reached at amcgillf@utk.edu, nward2@utk.edu, and maria.cahill@uky.edu.

Eight Mistakes Teachers Make at the End of the School Year



1. Letting the students take over. Students begin to get antsy toward the end of the year. They become bold in their actions and that often leads to misbehavior and wild classes...which leads to frustrated, frazzled teachers. To avoid this, over plan. Students need structure, in general, but not ever as much as they need it at the end of the year. Plan engaging, hands-on, lessons and activities with the fun stuff you wish you could teach, but don't get to because of state standards, testing, etc. That being said, mistake #2 is...



2. Not embracing students' energy. As the weather starts to warm and the end of school is in sight, the energy level rises. Acknowledging it and embracing it, as opposed to fighting it or trying to control it, will make the last few days much more enjoyable. Find ways to harness the energy with content games, such as Jeopardy-type reviews, or board races in Math. Take more brain breaks than usual and enjoy the fun!

3. Not preparing a reflection opportunity of the year's learning. Students need to pause for reflection and to synthesize new information frequently. Give them an opportunity to reflect on all their learning from the school year, whether it be academic, social, or behavioral. Ideas to facilitate this are creating memory books or reflection journaling. For secondary students, [try this reflection poster!](#)

4. Forgetting to document. Each end-of-year is rough, but each one can be a little less rough than the last just by documenting. Teachers get so tired and stretched so thin that we forget to make notes about what worked and what didn't. Save the notes in a safe place that you will find before the end of next year. Set your future self up for success!

5. Not making personal connections. Hand write your students a letter, personalize their yearbook note, give them a meaningful gift, exchange email addresses. Do something that allows the students to have a tangible memento letting them know how much they've meant to you. This can be more difficult with secondary teachers who teach 75+ kids, but strive





to do it anyway. The gesture will mean more to most of them than a lot of our teaching and it will help them look back fondly of you!



6. Not having students help

pack up your room.

Teachers are exhausted. Students seem to have more energy than ever. Win-win for shutting down a classroom for the summer! Trying to do everything on your own will just wear you down even more! (Okay, I must admit. This one is a little difficult for me to do. I am a little bit particular about the way things get packed away because I know the process for unpacking. If done wrong, it can create a lot more work to begin the next school year. So, I have found the solution.) Spend a little time upfront making a plan for exactly what all needs to be done and how you want it organized. Select students who are task-masters and let them have fun! For the others, they can run errands, clean white boards, move desks/tables, stack textbooks, etc.

7. Hanging around with the "Negative

Nancies." We have established that the end of the year can be overwhelming and frustrating. Administrators seem to neglect logic, students have forgotten the rules and procedures, and your to-do list is longer than time allows. We are all experiencing the same emotions and venting can be healthy. But remember that negativity breeds negativity. Be careful that you don't allow yourself to fall into the trap of making yourself more miserable than necessary by letting others' burdens pile on top of yours.

8. Forgetting to

have fun.

The last days of school provide the unique opportunity for the students to get to see a true lighter side of you. When appropriate, let loose and get silly with the kids. Join them for a pick-up game on the basketball courts, allow the girls to do your hair and/or make-up one morning, give fun opportunities for rewards. My team has an annual tradition of allowing students to throw pies in the face of a teacher of choice on the last day. The students look forward to it all year and it really does create those wonderful



lasting memories that live forever. Be sure to smile...it's the last thing they will remember of you!

Developing Student Self-Regulation

In this article in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, Lori Korinek and Sharon deFur (College of William and Mary) tackle the skills of self-regulation – how students manage, monitor, and assess their social and academic behaviors. "These skills," say Korinek and deFur, "help students engage in behaviors such as attending, participating, following directions, organizing, managing materials and time, and completing assignments – behaviors associated with increased academic and social performance across a variety of subjects and school levels." When students don't master self-regulation – all too common among those with disabilities – they are at increased risk of underachieving, being absent from school, having strained relationships with peers and adults, and dropping out. Here are some teacher practices that develop self-regulation in all students, especially those with disabilities:



- *Organize the classroom.* A variety of visual prompts will support greater student independence and self-direction – for example, pictures and words to label and explain materials, directions, and classroom routines; timers to signal the beginning and end of activities; notebooks, binders, planners, calendars, and folders to help students organize their work; breaking down complex projects into bite-size chunks; and the teacher modeling organizational tools.
- *Establish expectations, rules, and routines.* Clarity in this area is an essential foundation for student self-regulation, say Korinek and deFur. "Expectations and routines should be modeled, practiced with feedback, consistently enforced, and reinforced multiple times until they become standard operating procedures for students," they say. *Catching students*





being good is more effective than punishing students for breaking rules.

Use checklists. These are especially helpful for breaking down complex tasks and visually guiding students through the steps needed to complete activities. A sample morning routine checklist:

- **Backpack in cubby or locker.**
- **Take out materials – binder, books, pencil, and paper.**
- **Copy assignments.**
- **Complete warm-up.**
- *A sample calm-down checklist:*
 - **Breathe deeply.**
 - **Quiet voice.**
 - **Count to ten.**
 - **Hands and feet to self.**
- *Give students choice and voice. It's important to have regular opportunities for students to make decisions about materials and activities and add their opinions to how the class is conducted – “Would you prefer this or that?” These are stepping-stones to self-regulation. “A teacher mindset of developing self-regulation strategies with students (not for them or providing to them) increases the likelihood that students will have the opportunities, practice, and appropriate levels of support they require to become more responsible and independent over time,” say the authors.*
- *Model self-regulation language and skills. This may involve teacher “think-alouds”, verbal prompts, and specific feedback to help students work toward greater independence.*



- *Set goals. This can start with class-wide goals with student input, followed by individual student goals – problems completed, sentences written, less time with transitions, homework submitted. “Gradually, more responsibility for monitoring is shifted to students with periodic teacher checks for accuracy,” say the authors.*
- *Use strategic questions. Teachers can frame*

their questions to prompt self-regulatory behaviors before, during, and after tasks. Asking rather than telling develops independence. Here are some questions to prompt self-regulation:

- *What needs to be done? What is your goal?*
 - *How will you do it? What are the steps?*
 - *What do you do first? Next?*
 - *How would you rate your performance?*
 - *What parts went well? What helped you?*
 - *What was difficult? What would you change?*
 - *What is your goal for next time?*
 - *Provide positive feedback. It should be immediate, frequent, specific, and enthusiastic – “You remembered to use your quiet voice in group today.” “You finished more problems than last time. Well done!” As students’ progress, praise can shift from specific behaviors to recognizing students’ increased independence and self-direction.*



Korinek and deFur recommend that teachers assess their current practices in light of this list, identify areas for improvement, set goals, and monitor progress.

“Supporting Student Self-Regulation to Access the General Education Curriculum” by Lori Korinek and Sharon deFur in *Teaching Exceptional Children*, May/June 2016 (Vol. 48, #5, p. 232-242), <http://bit.ly/1qYouLj>; Korinek can be reached at lakori@wm.edu

